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Drawer 15

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Lincoln's Illinois tomb vandalized

Posted on : 2007-01-10 | Author : General News Editor
News Category : General

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Jan. 10 (UPI) Police are searching for vandals who destroyed a 100-year-old urn at the Springfield, Ill., tomb of Abraham Lincoln during New Year's weekend.

The concrete urn, a decorative replica of the original dated to the early 20th century, was pushed off the edge of the receiving vault at the tomb, where it fell and shattered. Nothing else was damaged, the Springfield State Journal-Register reported Wednesday.

The broken urn was discovered Jan. 2 by a cemetery employee who notified police. The property visited by generations of school children on field trips is guarded by surveillance cameras, but it is unknown if anything useful to police was captured, the Journal-Register reported.

Lincoln's tomb was built between 1869 and 1874 and is the final resting place of Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary Todd, and three of the couple's four sons. The tomb has been the target of vandalism before, once in 1987 and again in 1997, at which point then-Governor Jim Edgar ordered 24-hour monitoring of the tomb.

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Vandals destroy urn at Lincoln's tomb

Concrete reproduction about 100 years old

By JAYETTE BOLINSKI
STAFF WRITER

Published Wednesday, January 10, 2007

Police and state historic officials want to find out who destroyed a century-old urn by pushing it off the peak of the receiving vault behind Abraham Lincoln's tomb over New Year's weekend.

The decorative concrete urn was a reproduction of the original and dated to the early 1900s, according to Dave Blanchette, spokesman for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which oversees the Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site on the grounds of Oak Ridge Cemetery.

"We won't know a dollar value until we get the replacement estimate," Blanchette said Tuesday. "Anything that's historic you really can't put a dollar value on, so the only measure would be its replacement value, and we'll see what that is."

A cemetery employee notified police about 10:20 a.m. Jan. 2 after discovering the demolished urn. The vandal struck sometime between 5 p.m. New Year's Eve and 8:30 a.m. Jan. 2.

A Springfield police report indicated someone pushed the urn off the vault. Officers photographed the broken piece and found no other damage on cemetery grounds.

Lincoln's tomb, built between 1869 and 1874 and a national historic landmark, is the final resting place of Lincoln, his wife and three of their four sons. The public receiving vault is at the base of a hill on the north side of the tomb.

The stone vault was the scene of the president's funeral on May 4, 1865, following his assassination. It was constructed in 1860, according to the state historic preservation agency.

Lincoln's body remained in the vault for seven months until it was moved in December 1865 to a temporary vault on the east side of the hill where Lincoln's tomb now stands. His body was moved several more times before being finally interred in its current manner and location inside the tomb.

The original urn that stood at the peak of the vault was there in the mid-1800s but later was replaced with the concrete reproduction, Blanchette said. Officials are collecting estimates to replace the urn and "do intend to replace it," he added.

There are no guards on site, but the property is continuously monitored by electronic surveillance equipment, Blanchette said. It is unknown if the surveillance equipment captured any useful information for police.

"We are working with Springfield police on the incident. We don't want to

release too awful many specific details about how or when it was done because it's still an open investigation for them," he said.

Oak Ridge Cemetery is open from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily.

In February 1997, someone spray-painted swastikas, obscenities and other graffiti on the exterior of the tomb, generating national attention.

In response to that incident, then-Gov. Jim Edgar ordered around-the-clock security for the tomb. Previously, the tomb was supervised only from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, when it was open to visitors.

Prior to that, vandals in 1987 spray-painted racial slurs and other graffiti on the tomb, and in June 1990, two 200-pound urns were rolled from the deck of the tomb down the stairway, chipping the stairs and cracking an urn. In that incident, bolt cutters were used to cut the chain on the door to the old vault, where $100 in coins was taken.

Jayette Bolinski can be reached at 788-1530 or jayette.bolinski@sj-r.com.

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Sword stolen from Lincoln's Tomb statue

By JASON NEVEL (jason.nevel@sj-r.com)
The State Journal-Register
Posted Nov 11, 2011 @ 11:00 PM
Last update Nov 12, 2011 @ 07:43 AM

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Not even Lincoln's Tomb is immune to the spree of copper thefts that have hit the Springfield area.

A copper sword brandished by a statue of a Civil War artillery officer atop the tomb was stolen sometime between September and early November.

The theft is believed to have been a first to state property at the **Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site** since 1890, said Dave Blanchette, a spokesman for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

A tomb employee noticed the sword was missing last week.

The sword was part of a statue grouping mounted on the terrace of the tomb. There are **four such groupings** on the balcony, one each representing the artillery, cavalry, infantry and navy during the Civil War.

"We just cannot imagine why someone would even think about doing it, le
and actually do it," Blanchette said.

Site officials plan to repair the statue, he said.

The theft probably occurred after Oak Ridge Cemetery was closed to visito
that a chain blocks daytime visitors from climbing the stone stairs to the b

"Anyone who would have gone up would have been noticed by a worker," l

The thief broke off the roughly 3-foot-long sword at the handle. No signifi
rest of the statue.

Thefts of state property at the site are extremely rare, Blanchette said.

The last incident is thought to have occurred 101 years ago, he said, when
from the artillery group. That sword would have been bronze, the metal th
cast from (much of the raw material for the statues came from melted-dov

The bronze sword is believed to have been replaced by the copper version

Outside of those thefts, the tomb suffers an incident of vandalism about o
said. The most glaring example was in 1987, when racist graffiti was spray
teenagers were arrested for the crime.

A security guard was stationed at the tomb overnight in response to that i
However, within a couple of years, budget problems forced lawmakers to
said.

Jason Nevel can be reached at 788-1521.

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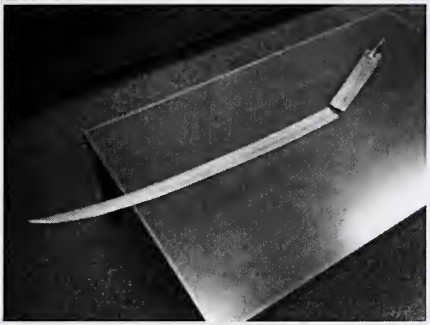
Ted Schurter/The StateJournal-Register
The thief broke off the roughly 3-foot-long sword at the handle. No significant damage was done to the rest of the statue of a Civil War artillery officer.

Ted Schurter/The StateJournal-Register
A copper sword brandished by a statue at the tomb that represents a Civil War artillery officer was stolen sometime between September and Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2011. The theft is believed to have been to first to state property at Lincoln's Tomb State Historic Site since 1890.

By JASON NEVEL (jason.nevel@sj-r.com)
The State Journal-Register
Posted Dec 06, 2011 @ 11:00 PM
Last update Dec 07, 2011 @ 06:38 AM



Jason Piscia/SJ-R.com
A 3-foot copper sword reported missing from the Lincoln Tomb Historic Site last month was recovered and returned to state officials during a news conference in Police Chief Robert Williams' office on Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2011

A 16-year-old boy arrested Tuesday for stealing the copper sword brandished by a Civil War artillery statue atop the Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site wasn't trying to make money by selling it for scrap, Springfield police said Tuesday.

The boy was arrested after police received a tip from Crime Stoppers Monday. He faces charges of theft and criminal trespass to state-supported property. Two other people also could face criminal trespass charges, police said.

The theft is believed to have been the first to state property at the site since 1890, when the same sword was stolen from the artillery group, one of four statue groups that represent Civil War soldiers on the tomb's upper-level terrace.

The artillery statue is on the rear of the tomb, about 15 feet off the terrace floor. The boy broke off the roughly 3-foot-long sword at the handle. No significant damage was done to the rest of the statue.

The original sword would have been bronze, the metal the statues are cast from (much of the raw material for the statues came from melted-down Civil War cannons). The bronze sword apparently taken in 1890 is believed to have been replaced by the copper version.

Police said it is highly unlikely the boy knew that the sword he took was the only copper sword on any of the statues.

How it happened

Police said the boy confessed that the damage happened in October. He said he climbed the statue after Oak Ridge Cemetery closed and grabbed the blade of the sword, which came loose and fell, breaking into two pieces.

At least two other people were with the boy at the time, police said.

The boy initially told police he panicked and threw the sword into a wooded area behind the Sangamon Center North shopping center on Sangamon Avenue.

However, upon further questioning, he admitted hiding part of the sword in a broken-down van parked in an alley west of the 2300 block of North Third Street. He kept the smaller piece, police said.

Home sweet home

Police returned both pieces of the sword to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency Tuesday. It was not immediately clear what the agency's plans are for the sword.

IHPA deputy director Catherine Shannon said she has received telephone calls from businesses willing to replace the sword for free.

She said she was surprised to learn the sword had been recovered.

Jason Nevel can be reached at 788-1521.

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Updated May 09, 2012 @ 06:03 PM

Lincoln Tomb gets its sword back Friday

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By The Abraham Lincoln Observer

A copper sword brandished by a statue at the tomb that represents a Civil War artillery officer was stolen sometime between September and Wednesday, Nov. 9, 2011. The theft is believed to have been to first to state property at Lincoln's Tomb State Historic Site since 1890.

The sword that was broken off one of the military figures atop the **Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site** will be replaced Friday, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency said today.

The sword **was broken by a teenager** who had climbed the now-off-limits-to-the-public upper deck of the tomb after closing hours in October. The youth was arrested in December after a tip to police. The incident received national publicity (including this **Jay Leno sketch**).

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The broken pieces of sword were recovered. However, what the teenager broke was a reproduction anyway.

The sword, which is brandished by the officer in sculptor and tomb designer Larkin Mead's "artillery" battle grouping on the northwest corner of the tomb, had been broken before -- in the 1890s. All the sculptures are of bronze (much of the original raw material came from melted-down Civil War cannons), but after the 1890s theft, the artillery officer's sword was replaced by a copper version.

This replacement will again be bronze. It will be installed by Marshall Svendsen, director of **True Form Productions** of Chicago.

"Svendsen's firm was one of several across the country who volunteered their services to repair the sculpture after seeing the nationwide publicity surrounding last fall's incident," the IHPA said in a news release.

The installation is expected to take place from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Friday.

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booklady *4 months ago* Report Abuse

So, once again, we all get punished due to one person's ignorance. It was nice to be able to go to the upper level. Nice view. But because of one yahoo, now no one can do it. Sad.

The Abraham Lincoln Observer *4 months ago* Report Abuse

Booklady: No, the closure decision dates back a couple of years and is related to insurance liability. The kid was not only up there after hours, he would have been up there improperly even if the tomb had been open.

Thanks for reading.

senna *3 months ago* Report Abuse

This is good news, with the state in the financial ruin, at least the sword will be back in the stone.

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